



A bittersweet farewell

The 19th Annual Tourism Conference Aruba ends as a tribute to Scott Wiggins

"To love what you do-and feel that it matters; how could anything be more fun?" –Scott Wiggins.

Wednesday evening saw the end of the 19th Annual Tourism Conference Aruba (ATCA) with a gala event on De Palm Island that brought tears to the eyes of many that attended. The reason for the strong emotions was that the event was not simply an end to another brainstorming session of Aruba's marketing associations and its partners, but a farewell to Scott Wiggins, who as Senior Director of Marketing for AHATA (Aruba Hotel and Tourism Association) these past seventeen years, was instrumental in the development and success of Aruba's tourism product.

Scott is leaving his position to devote his time to running his families resort in Ithaca, New York, which aside from Aruba, he calls home with his wife Cash. She was with him for this visit to Aruba and Scott's final conference, showing the ropes to his successor, Stephen Tipsword.

Upon his arrival at DePalm Island, Scott found a reception committee numbering well over a hundred lining the dock with glittering glasses inscribed with his name and raised in a toast to the colleague they love and admire. Greeting him on the shore were the Minister of Tourism, Edison Brieson, Jorge Pesquera, Director of AHATA, and Myrna Jansen, Director of the Aruba Tourism Authority (ATA). Concealed behind Scott's brother, Marcus, was an additional surprise for him; Wally Wiggins, his father. An icon of Aruba's tourism industry, he flew from New York for the day just to share this evening in honor of his son.

The evening began with a video compilation of still shots demonstrating Scott's many years working for the establishment and recognition of Aruba, interspersed with observant quotes about him from his colleagues. Lisette Malmberg, representing her family, offered her own memories of their relationship with Scott. She presented him with a gift, a painting of the island's famous Fofoti tree by noted Aruban artist Timothy Charles.

The highlight of the evening was when Wally Wiggins took the stage. He is a published author and inveterate storyteller aside from an icon of Aruba tourism, the founder of the Divi Resorts. He related the history of his son and Aruba in allegory; a tale of a young man who comes to the attention of an older woman. "She was pretty wise, and especially ageless, "recounted Wally," and understood that Scott was just a child, and didn't understand all her virtues, so she waited for him. Followed his career, the time came when SHE decided he was old enough, and decided she would have an affair with him." He then described how Aruba won not only Scott's devotion as a marketing employee, but his love and passion for an island and its people. "SHE has been Scott's passion for the past seventeen years," he continued, "but passion is not enough to sustain a love affair, it takes something more, something deeper. Scott found that in the people of Aruba; he appreciated and respected their gentleness and kindness to him; their generosity in sharing with him this beautiful island, and his love followed their love...I am so very proud that he has done what he has, he invited the world to come to this island...to share his passion."

The tribute continued with words of gratitude and admiration from Minister Briesen and Myrna Jansen, who presented Scott with a parting gift, a painting by internationally famous Aruban artist Gustave Nouel depicting Scott lounging under a Divi tree. As a liaison between the ATA and AHATA, the public and private sectors that manage and market Aruba, he held a key position, working side by side with government employees. Myrna described him as an "icon" and an instrumental part of the "Aruba tourism family." Minister Brieson expressed that he could think of no one "that knows Aruba and the Caribbean as well as Scott," and offered some reminiscences of the years working with him. David Fitzgerald of Aruba's advertising agency in Atlanta also offered his own tribute and gift; a scrapbook of memories accumulated over the years together, expressing that they experience very few events "for the living" such as this one.

A final surprising note was a rendition by Jorge of the song "My Way," with lyrics modified to recount memorable events over the years, and the refrain "you did it SCOTT'S WAY!"

Scott responded to this magnificent tribute with his typical humor and modesty, and a sincere attempt not to cry. "No man is an island, but an island can define the man," he said, "from the first day I landed in Aruba it captured my heart and my soul and my passion...thank you all for giving me so much...and teaching me the passion and compassion. To get a party like this...I must have died." He also offered a particular thanks to his wife Cash, for being so understanding, patient and supportive all these years.

Scott will now manage his family's properties in Ithaca, New York, but surely will not remain a stranger to Aruba. Aruba and those that love him are not saying "Adios" to Scott, only "T'oro."